



WOMEN & FAMILIES CENTER
Serving Connecticut families for over 100 years

HB 6361 An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Carissa Simpson. I am a state certified Sexual Assault Crisis Counselor Advocate and Assistant Director of Prevention and Intervention Services for the Women and Families Center.

Women and Families Center provides services to residents of Meriden, Wallingford, Cheshire, Middlesex County and Greater New Haven including providing accompaniment to five hospitals in our service area.

When considering the need for SANE nurses, two experiences come to mind. In one, I was providing support to a 15 year old girl at one of our area hospitals. When I arrived at the ER, the nurse brought me back to the victim's room so that I could complete the evidence collection kit, not understanding that my role was to support the victim while she herself did the kit. I stepped out of the room with the nurse and explained what my role was as a sexual assault crisis counselor. The nurse stated that she had never completed an evidence collection kit. I had to talk the nurse through the steps of the evidence collection while supporting the needs of the sexual assault victim. If a trained SANE nurse had been available I would have been able to devote 100% attention to the victim, ensuring that her needs were met and that she felt supported throughout the process.

At another hospital, we are called in for every victim that presents at the Emergency Department. A SANE nurse is available 24 hours a day through an on call system. When I was last called to this hospital, the nurse waited until I arrived before beginning the evidence collection kit. This allowed me to talk with the survivor and provide her with information about the kit and examination before she began. As the nurse began the kit, the survivor had a few questions and the nurse stopped the kit to answer every question she had and made sure that she felt ok about moving forward. As she progressed through the kit, she described exactly what she was doing so that there were no surprises for the survivor. This survivor was grateful to have someone so gentle and supportive on her side. This allowed me to be present as an additional support to the survivor while the nurse focused on the evidence collection.

These two examples clearly illustrate the importance of having SANE nurses in each facility. Survivors deserve to receive care from trained medical personnel following a sexual assault. A state SANE program is the most cost effective, efficient and timely way to make sure that hospitals have access to SANEs to provide high quality care to sexual assault victims and special forensic skills to collect evidence to help successfully prosecute offenders. Having a supportive SANE nurse is crucial to every survivor out there.

I urge to you to support HB 6361.
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